[P.56]

CHAPTER X

COORG (Contd.)

241 THE principal occupation of the Coorgs is agriculture. Wet land cultivation predominates, but cultivation in dry and high lands is also made for the maintenance of large united families with numerous dependents. Agriculture is of a rude type and is similar to that prevailing in other parts of India. It is a system of rural economy formed at a remote period and transmitted for ages unchanged. Wedded to primitive modes of cultivation, the Coorg views with disapprobation any attempts at innovation. The industry of the people of the Highlands is confined exclusively to rice. The narrow valleys between the high grounds are very productive. The agricultural implements are of a rude type. And yet the yield has furnished an unfailing supply from ancient times both for consumption and for export to Malabar. Wherever practicable, the valleys have been formed into flat terraces for cultivation.

243 712 [221] [354] The agricultural year begins about the middle of April. With the onset of the first showers in April or May, the ploughing commences. On an auspicious day before sunrise, the house lamp, *Tali-akki-baleke* (dish-rice-lamp) which plays a conspicuous role on all festive occasions, is lighted in the inner verandah, the members of the family assemble and invoke the blessings of their ancestors and Kaveri Amma. The young men make obeisance to their parents and elders and drive a pair of bullocks to the paddy fields, where they turn the heads of them to the east. The landlord now offers coconuts and plantains, rice and milk to the presiding deity of his Nad and lifting up his hands to the rising sun, he invokes his blessings. The oxen are yoked and three furrows are ploughed, when he takes a clod to the granary, and offers his prayers to Siva to grant him an increase of one hundred times. From 6 to 10 in the morning the ploughing is continued in the fields and turned two or three times. Then the borders are trimmed, the channels are cleaned, and the little banks repaired to regulate water.

243 [221] Regulated by the monsoon rain, the rice-transplanting takes place during July and August. The women covered with gorakes, which rest on the head and protect the whole body, pull out the plants from the nursery and tie them in small bundles which are collected in one spot. Meanwhile, the submerged fields are repeatedly ploughed and levelled, till the soil becomes as soft as treacle. All the members of the family standing in a line knee deep [47] in the muddy fields begin the transplanting. The bundles are conveniently deposited in the field, and each man takes a handful of plants at a time into his left hand, and presses into the mud with great rapidity seven or eight

COORG TRIBES AND CASTES

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Disposal of the Dead

The Amma Coorgs used to bury the dead which is now being abandoned. Pollution lasts for ten days.

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Occupation

The Amma Coorgs are agriculturists They do all agricultural operations, ploughing, sowing and harvesting. Both men and women work.

Conclusion

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771
+2
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The Amma Coorgs follow the Coorgs in point of inheritance. They worship the Hindu deities and observe Hindu holidays. They are inferior to the Coorgs in physical appearance and strength of body. They are now trying to improve their condition. They are strict vegetarians. They marry within the same *gotra* This may eventually hasten their extinction.

[P 69 ff. have not been Processed for this file]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

132 [164] ment. A peculiar ulcer-disease on the limbs has lately been rather prevalent about Virajpet, which is ascribed to impoverished blood, for want of nourishing animal diet.

[727] [648] The account which natives of Mysore or from the Western Coast give of the climate of Coorg is not favorable. They have experience on their side. Of the large number of people, whom Tippu sent from Mysore to replace the ancient inhabitants, or who during the various wars were carried off by the Coorg Rajahs from the neighbouring countries to cultivate their lands, but few survived the change. In our days the [167] thousands of Mysore coolies who annually emigrate to work on the Government roads or on coffee estates stand the climate much better, care being bestowed upon them and a periodical return to their homes being rendered practicable.

● 241 178 **4. Cultivation of the principal productions.**

Native agriculture in Coorg, as elsewhere in India, is still carried on as it was centuries ago. A system of rural economy, formed at a remote period and transmitted for ages unchanged, is not likely to be disturbed by so conservative a people, as are the Coorgs.

243 *Rice* is the staple product of Coorg. The numerous valleys throughout the land have, from ancient times, yielded an unfailing supply every year for home consumption and for exportation to the Malabar Coast. The rice-valleys are most extensive in South-Coorg, in the neighbourhood of Virajpet and in Kiggatnád, where some fields are of considerable breadth and several miles in length; but owing to the surrounding low, deforested hills which yield little fertilizing detrition, the soil is of a quality inferior to those fields of the narrower valleys near the Ghats, where the ground is terraced at considerable pains, but every field large enough for the use of the plough. The lower and broader fields of a

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

the blossoming, hence the importance of spring rains. The 245
leaves are oblong, lanceolate, dark green and glossy on the 137
upper, paler on the lower side and form a striking contrast with the snowy flowers or red berries. After a fertile blossoming the ovaries, if favoured by a few showers, swell rapidly and the green berries resemble olives. In October they become hard, turn yellow and, when mature, red. They now resemble cherries. We open one. A sweet aromatic succulent pulp encloses 2 beans, which are surrounded by a parchment like skin, which, when dry, easily drops off. A thin silky skin called the "silver-skin" is the last coating of the bean which, if of good quality, is long, of a bluish green colour and of a peculiar aroma. In some cherries there is but one bean developed which fills up the whole space. It is round and called Peaberry, and fancy assigns to it a higher price in the market than to ordinary coffee.

The separation of the fresh pulp from the beans is effected 245
on the estate by a machine called "pulper," after which the [407]
parchment coffee is washed and slightly fermented to remove all saccharine and gummy matter, carefully dried and sent to the Coast, where it is peeled, garbled, sized, packed and shipped for the market.

Considering that every crop takes a certain amount of 245
nourishment out of the soil, it is clear, that something in the 134
shape of manure must be given to it in return, and it is 241 •
generally acknowledged, that according to the chemical analysis of the coffee bean, the Coorg soil wants phosphate of lime, carbonate of magnesia and potash as the principal ingredients of the requisite manure, and a mixture of superphosphate of lime and Peruvian guano or stable-manure. [1]
Lime and ashes may be the nearest approach to it. Experiments with different proportions of these materials on a number of trees of equal growth soon show which is the most effectual mixture for each locality.

[1] [Errata: This should read "stable-manure," (comma) rather than "stable-manure." (period). See corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 473 -- Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AWS Coorg AWS

244 *English Vegetables* are satisfactorily grown by Mercara
137 residents and still more so by some planters on their estates. Potatoes and Cabbage thrive remarkably well; also Peas, Beans, Knoll kohl, Salad, Beets, Turnips and Carrots of excellent quality are produced. The natives do now only attempt to cultivate these vegetables, but the markets are unsupplied with them.

244 *Native Vegetables*, which are reared on patches of paddy-fields after harvest time, or in small gardens, in the villages about Fraserpet, include: French Beans, Radishes, Pumpkins, Cucumbers, Indian Corn, Brinjals, Chillies, Coriander, Amaranthus and others, but even these are not plentiful in the Mercara market, and what there is comes chiefly from Fraserpet.

243 *Dry grain*, such as Ragy, Avary, Tavary, Huruli and others are chiefly grown in the open country of the Nanjarájpatna taluq lying along the western banks of the Kávéri. It is there also, that Tobacco is cultivated for sale, whilst in most of the Coorg farms little reserved patches of the narcotic is grown for home-consumption; but the Coorg tobacco is of an indifferent description, no particular care being bestowed upon its cultivation. The introduction of a new seed would
[248] have a beneficial influence. A few Hemp plants are here and
[296] there grown near native houses, but more for the use of smoking the intoxicating leaves, than for the sake of the fibre.

● 241 Similar to other hilly parts of India, there prevails a
243 primitive mode of cultivation called "kumari," which is practised by the lowest classes of natives, the Kurumbas and Kudiaa, chiefly on the western slopes of the Ghats. They cut and burn a patch of jungle, and plant either the small reddish hill-rice, sown broadcast upon the slightly dug up land, or Ragy. The former yields a 10 fold, the latter a 200 to 300 fold return. Such fields are only once or twice cultivated, when they are abandoned in favour of a new piece

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

of jungle and not resumed till after 5 or 6 years. This wanton jungle-waste has however been put a stop to by Government and brought within reasonable limits.

Bringing to a close the subject of Arbori-horti-culture in Coorg, it were ungrateful, did I omit to mention the many and beautiful exotic flowers and shrubs, that ornament the gardens of European residents and recall by their presence sweet remembrances of distant Home; I forbear however to enumerate any beyond the modest Violet, the fragrant Rose and the showy Dahlia, and leave it to the fancy of the reader to associate with these types of spring, summer and autumn the many other garden flowers, that are familiar to Europeans.

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4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

3. SOCIAL LIFE OF THE COORGS.

a. The Coorg house.

The Coorg houses are generally situated close to their paddy-fields on a sheltering slope of Báne land, surrounded by clumps of plantain trees, sago and betel-nut palms and other fruit-bearing trees. A coffee garden and a small plot for the growth of native vegetables are seldom absent, and, where the locality is favourable, a little tank well stocked with fish is not uncommon. The position, the style of building and the approaches of old Coorg houses strongly remind one of small fortifications, and tradition points back to a time of general feuds, when chief fought with chief, clan with clan. In the deep cadangas or ditches with high banks, we still see memorials of that warlike state of affairs. These war-ditches intersect the mountainous districts in every direction, and resisted not only many a furious attack of contending parties, but also the force of the annual monsoon.

A deeply cut passage, paved with rough stones and overgrown with shady trees, and the sloping side walls decked with a variety of luxuriant ferns, leads you in angular lines to the doorway, passing under an out-house. Over a paved courtyard, on three sides enclosed by stables, store-rooms and servants' quarters, you come to the front of the main building, which is a square of one story and raised about 3 feet above the ground. All the buildings are roofed with bamboos, and thatched with rice-straw. Considering that there is an open square hall in the centre of the house, called nadumane there remain the four sides only for habitable quarters. The front side however is reserved for an open verandah—the reception hall. Near to the right end the principal door leads to the inner rooms, which are all dark, opening only by a small door into the inner square, which is lit by the sky-light formed

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

356 The house and yard are generally kept clean and orderly,
574 and the announcement of an approaching honored visitor sets at once the broom into activity and you may arrive just in time to see the retreating Coorg damsel and have to swallow the raised dust. However, the object is attained, you perceive what attention has been paid to you.

312 A stone built deep well is usually in the compound or the
[515] water is fetched from a hole sunk by the side of the paddy-fields, and near the well is the hut for hot bathing.

357 The low caste servants have their huts at some distance
564 from the Coorg house; the meals given them they eat on
361 plantain leaves apart from their masters.
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As already remarked the Coorg house is the domicile of all the male relatives with their wives and children belonging
591 to one parental stock. The landed property, or Jamma-pâmi,
423 is vested in the house and cannot be alienated from it, or divided amongst its members. The farm is cultivated by all
[476] the housepeople under the management of the master of the
[241] house, and the produce is divided amongst them after the Huttari feast. It often occurs, however, that an energetic member of the house or one in Government employment, acquires for himself some fields called Koppa, which are his own, and if sufficient for the support of his family, he may
591 live there and establish a new house. Others own a small
423 coffee plantation or cardamom-garden, and these individual
178 enterprises seem to be the natural transition to an impending general social reform—the breaking up of the great houses, and the independent establishment of each married couple residing near their own paddy-fields, and eating the fruit of their own labour. The indolent will then have to work for their subsistence or sink into misery, the industrious and thrifty will prosper, and after a period of no little angry strife a happier life of personal freedom and domestic felicity will be the inheritance of future generations. The only danger to be apprehended is the tendency of the rich houses absorb-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

exists amongst the ryots. The Kiggatnád rice-fields are extensive and fertile, the grass-lands parklike, the mountain streams numerous, and the forests and jungles rich in valuable timber and bamboos. The Marenád- and Brahmagiri-hills with their cascades of the Barapolle and Laksmanatírtha are picturesque and their shólas and dense forests give cover to a variety of game. Many of the undulating grass-hills (Báne), being almost bare of trees and free from stones, seem admirably suited for dry cultivation, besides there are large pieces of other waste land; but the population is rather scanty and hardly sufficient for the cultivation of their rice-fields, since the abolishment of slavery. There are both European and native coffee-plantations in the Marenád-hills; but the natives seem to derive the greater profit from them. This taluq is in great want of good roads. There is only the military highroad from Periapatna to Cannanore, which is joined at the Gonikopal bridge by a branch road leading to Ponnappet; a trace has been cut to the Taluq-Kacheri and on to Kúrchi to connect Coorg with Wynád, but the work has been stopped. From Marenád a steep ghat, called the Mépalé-ghat, leads into the Malabar country and is used by the Lumbánies and Koramárs, who once a year carry rice from and salt into Coorg. A footpath leads into Wynád over the Brahmagiris by way of Tiranelli.

The south-eastern corner of Kiggatnád is unhealthy and strangers can scarcely be induced to settle there, in spite of the nearness of Kuttadámma's famous sanctuary, which cannot render the place more salubrious; fever, spleen and dropsy are the local diseases.

The Taluq-Kacheri is in *Hudikéri*. The place is well selected, being central and in a healthy locality on the top of a beautiful grass hill, whence a fine view of the Brahmagiris and Marenád-hills is obtained. An English School has been lately established and is promising well.

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632 [485] of the former fort. It was a happy thought to select this spot for a travellers' bangalow, where after a weary journey over the monotonous Mysore-road the traveller is placed in the midst of a charming scenery, a worthy introduction into Coorg!

[132] From the position of Fraserpet its climate is hotter than that of Mercara, but during the monsoon it is extremely pleasant, as very little rain falls there and the heat of the sun is moderated by constant clouds and light fogs. The nights are cool and pleasant, nor is the sun ever very oppressive at any season, except for an hour or two at midday; after the monsoon, however, and especially after considerable inundations by the Kávéri, the place becomes feverish and is not inhabited by Europeans.

The town was named "Fraserpet" in honor of General [162] [361] Fraser, the first Commissioner of Coorg. It contains now 326 houses, mostly tiled, and a population of 1,213 souls, of whom 360 are Christians, 388 Mussulmans and 465 Hindus. [368] The town can boast of a Roman Catholic Church, a newly built shrine, dedicated to Ganapati, with a very useful public well in front of it, an Anglo-Vernacular School, a native rest-house with a tank and a Government wood-yard, besides the [795] European bangalows. The Roman Catholics are mostly native or East Indian pensioned soldiers and their families, a detachment of Sappers and Miners having been stationed there when employed in making the great road to Mercara and the bridge over the Kávéri.

Sómawárpet in Yedavanád is 26¼ miles to the north of [131] Mercara and of the same elevation. It lies on the highroad [362] to Manjersabad, but there is nothing remarkable connected [162] with the Petta. Of its 197 houses 19 are tiled and 178 [241] thatched. Of the 953 inhabitants 862 are Hindus and 91 [437] Mussulmans. There are but few cultivators, most of them live on trade in various articles. Though fully alive to their